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Thomas Hollis Gifts to Linnaeus

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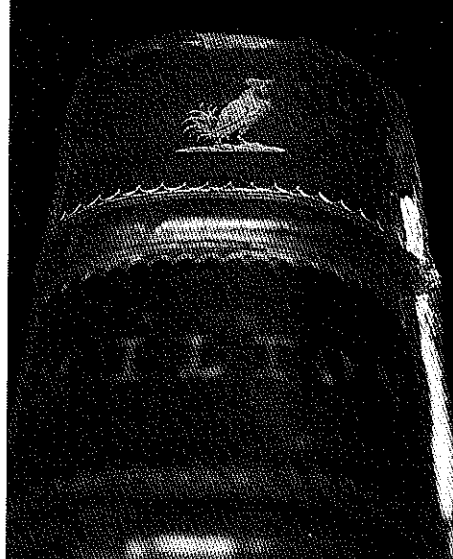
Carl Linnaeus in Uppsala, one of the few individuals (Jean-Jacques Rousseau in Switzerland was another) to whom he sent presents. The go-between was Johann Rudolf de Valltravers, F.R.S., a Swiss scientific amateur and friend of Hollis, who had made Linnaeus's acquaintance in 1760 and who acted on Hollis's behalf in arranging donations all over Europe. The correspondence from Valltravers to Linnaeus (consisting of 12 letters in Latin with one additional letter from Linnaeus to him) is preserved at the Linnean Society and covers a period from 20 November 1760 to 1 April 1764. The letters are particularly concerned with connections among other scientists in England and Switzerland, as well as the activities of scientific and other public societies in these countries and in Sweden itself. In his letter of 15 October 1761, Valltravers mentions that a noble Englishman had instructed him to request of Linnaeus that he accept a present for the "public" University Library of Uppsala, consisting of Milton's *Prose Works* (because, he bemoans, no one knows Milton except through his poems) and Toland's *Life of Milton*. Valltravers adds that this friend also requests that Linnaeus accept copies of these works for himself, along with the rules, premiums, and membership of the Royal Society of Arts, Manufactures, and Commerce. Unfortunately, all did not go as planned, as the ship carrying these presents (which had required many hours of preparation and considerable cost, as we know from Hollis's diary) was wrecked on its voyage and the entire cargo lost. As Valltravers informs Linnaeus, however, Hollis will replace the gifts, and, on 8 June 1762, he did just that. These replacement volumes are those preserved today in the Linnean Society.

The Toland and Milton volumes retain most of their original precious bindings. Hollis reserved his finest iconographic bindings for Milton, whom he considered the greatest voice for liberty in English history, and fought to keep his prose works before the public eye. In fact, he was secretly responsible for the publication of both the Toland *Life* and the edition of the *Prose Works*. He frequently sent these volumes to destinations, along with Toland as a sort of introduction to Milton's courageous stands for freedom of all sorts. Hollis had followed with concern the apparent attacks on liberty in Sweden by authoritarian challenges since 1755, with the "conspiracy" to subvert the constitution in that year. His donations to Uppsala, Stockholm, and to Linnaeus himself are evidence of his support. Years later, on 4 April 1767, he published anonymously in the *London Chronicle* a

summary of the new Swedish edict on the freedom of the press, which would restrict criticism of the King or state. He concludes: "Let the brave worthy Swedes read the Areopagitica, or speech for the liberty of unlicensed printing of John Milton—and get franker."

The two volumes of Milton's *Prose Works* are the most elaborately prepared of Hollis's gifts. The binding is in beautiful brown morocco leather, covered in gold-tooled stamps. Volume one bears on its front cover a seated Britannia, surrounded by a wreath of oak leaves. The cover is framed with elaborate gold rolls, with flower and star design. On the back is a gold-tooled spread-winged owl flanked by lyres, with the cover framed with the same design as the front. On the spine, at top and bottom, respectively, are the gold-tooled emblems of the cock and the seated owl. Volume two is similarly bound, but with a gold-tooled emblem of the standing Liberty figure on the front, flanked by two clubs of Hercules; and the Greco-Roman pileus liberty-cap on the back, flanked by two daggers. Each emblem in one way or another supports the cause of freedom

Emblem of a cock on Milton's *Prose Works*



against tyranny. As containers of privileged text, these bindings stand as precious reliquaries of the "life-spirit," to quote *Areopagitica*, of Milton's great writing.

The pages of these volumes are covered in Hollis's annotations and remarks, beginning with the inscription: "An English Gentleman is desirous of having the honor to present Milton's prose works & Toland's life of Milton, to Professor Linnaeus at Upsala. London June 8, 1762." He repeat-

+But so long as the Papist holds opinions subversive of morality, destructive of Society, dangerous to the civil & religious rights of mankind; that is, so long as the hand of Popery is against every man, so long every man's hand should be against Popery. . . . Three questions resolved. London, 1757, in octavo.

Hollis writes in Milton's *Prose Works*, vol. II, p. 138

edly instructs the reader to "OBSERVE", and underlines and marks important passages. Three of Hollis's comments illustrate some of his chief preoccupations. In the margin next to the words, "this is a severe insinuation against a standing army", in the preface to Milton's "Eikonoklastes", Hollis writes, "All history insinuates the same. The ruin of the Parliament cause, till then so nobly conducted, was the specious yet ridiculous self-denying ordinance, which changed the power from them to their own army. From that time all was violence and constraint, nor did the former spirit any longer appear, except faintly, at times, when the Army was engaged in wars at a distance, or was disturbed itself by internal Commotions" (pp. vi-vii). To the title of Milton's tract, "Of True Religion . . . And what best means may be used against the Growth of Popery", Hollis attaches a footnote: "But so long as the Papist holds opinions subversive of morality, destructive of Society, dangerous to the civil & religious rights of mankind; that is, so long as the hand of Popery is against every man, so long every man's hand should be against popery. . . . Three questions resolved [by Caleb Fleming]. London, 1757, in octavo."

And finally, displaying to Linnaeus the ingenuity of Hollis's own society, together with its commitment to the liberty cause, he writes: "Note, All the prints [of Milton and other heroes of liberty] in these two books, the Newton excepted, are struck off on paper made from silk rags, produced by premiums of the Society, the noble Society instituted at London for promoting arts & commerce" (vol. 2).

These volumes represent a dramatic gesture

towards Linnaeus and his country's institutions, an attempt to connect them with civic, scientific, and liberal networks throughout Europe and the New World.

For more information on Hollis and his activities, see especially W.H. Bond, *Thomas Hollis of Lincoln's Inn* (Cambridge, 1990); [Thomas Blackburne], *The Memoirs of Thomas Hollis*, 2 vols. (London, 1780); and Allen Reddick, "O Britannia! Hail! Thomas Hollis and James Boswell at Liberty in Geneva and Switzerland", in *Genève, lieu d'Angleterre, 1725–1814 = Geneva, an English Enclave, 1725–1814*, ed. V. Cossy, B. Kaposy, R. Whatmore (Geneva, 2009), pp. 241–268, and 'Introduction' to *From the Great Desire of Promoting Learning: Thomas Hollis's Gifts to the Harvard College Library*, W.H. Bond (*Harvard Library Bulletin* special issue, vol. 19, nos. 1–2, 2008), pp. 1–31.

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Four 18th-century volumes in the Linnean Society's collection are remarkable, both as examples of special bookbinding and handwritten annotation, and for their illumination of connections between Linnaeus and other individuals and scientific societies. The volumes are: John Milton's *Prose Works*, in two volumes, 1753–54; John Toland's *The Life of Milton with Amyntor*, 1751; and the *Rules and Orders of the Society for the Encouragement of Arts, Manufactures, and Commerce* (1761), bound with a list of members and premiums offered by the London society for the years 1761 and 1762. These books were sent anonymously to Linnaeus by Thomas Hollis (1720–74), the remarkable Englishman who worked mainly behind

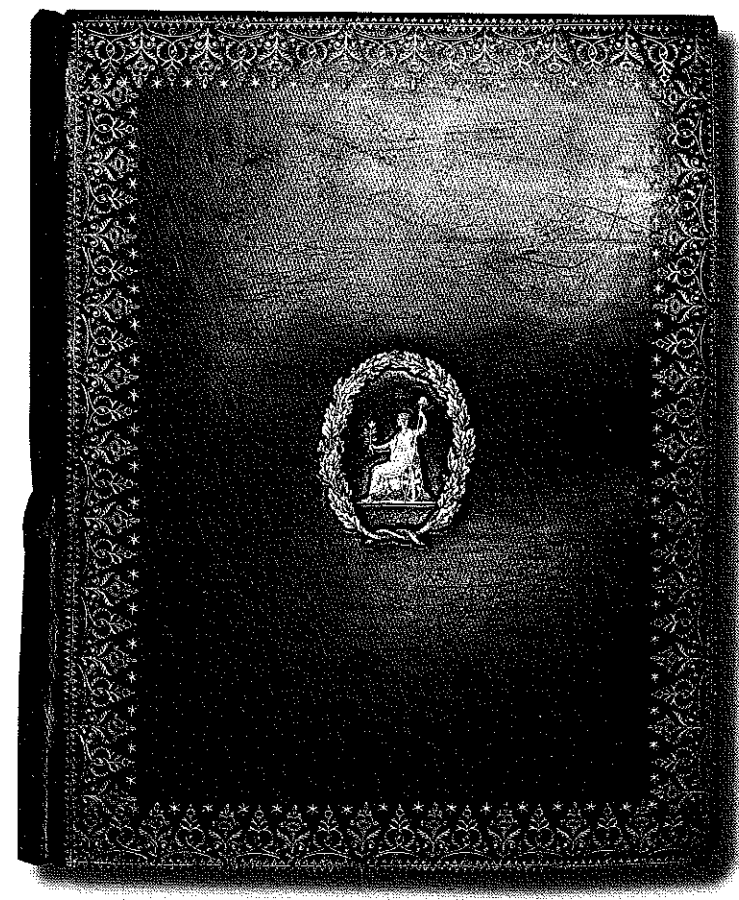
the scenes to promote civic causes and republican sympathies. Hollis's large range of activities consisted chiefly in promoting his causes anonymously in the periodical press, supporting the various learned societies in London, especially the Society for the Encouragement of Arts, Manufactures, and Commerce and the Society of Antiquaries, and, most remarkably, preparing and sending thousands of books to the American Colonies, Great Britain, and the Continent, to encourage his own political, social, and educational aims. Many of these books were specially prepared in beautiful bindings stamped in gold-tool with his own emblems, all designed by Giovanni Battista Cipriani. Within the books, Hollis annotated the

texts, sometimes extensively. His distribution efforts were the most extensive by an individual in the history of the world until our own time.

One of his destinations was the residence of

*Do they not err that devise evil?
But money & truth shall be to
them that devise good!*

Hollis's inscription in *A List of the Society for the Encouragement of Arts, Manufactures and Commerce* (1762)



Cover of Milton's *Prose Works*, vol. 1, showing Britannia